

*Knowing what to take, what not to take***Customs inspectors keep an eye out**

By SrA. Russ Martin
75th AEG Public Affairs

Upon redeployment, service members often ask themselves, "What do I get for my wife? What should I bring my office from here?"

Some members of the 75th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron have switched gears as Bright Star - 01/02 winds down and instead of focussing on the safety and interest of airmen here, they focus on a new task – customs.

SSgt. Ray Rice and SSgt. Kevin Abendschoen, 75th ESFS, have donned new hats as Customs Boarder Clearance Agents. Their job is to find and dispose of illegal contraband and items that may be harmful to U.S. agriculture.

Forty-eight hours before passengers head back to the states, Rice and

Abendschoen, spend the day going through cargo to be loaded on their aircraft, looking for banned items. When passengers process in the Joint Receiving Center before they leave, Rice and Abendschoen, check their bags to ensure compliance with customs and agriculture regulations.

"We're not doing this to act like the Gestapo," said Rice. "Things are banned for many reasons for the benefit of people in the states.

"Once, ship cargo was unloaded in the states and when the people who unloaded the boxes and pallets opened a crate, moths flew out," Rice said. "Now there's a problem with tree moths on the East Coast. All because someone in my shoes didn't pay close enough attention to their duties. That's not going to happen here."

When items are seized and taken away, they don't become part of the inspector's personal collection. It's taken and disposed of.

"If I find a box of Cuban Cigars in a box of equipment, personal baggage or anywhere, I'm going to seize them and smoke one right in front of whoever tried to sneak them through," Rice jokes. "I wouldn't do that, but people should know that this is serious stuff and we take up some of their time here, so they don't get to the states and get tied up for five hours and possibly get slapped with fines or imprisonment. So we want them to know before they get to us what's legal and what isn't so we can keep the inspection process moving."

While searching for that "perfect present" for friends, families or coworkers back home, there are several things to keep in mind when buying or scrounging items at Cairo West.

Prohibited items are fresh fruits and vegetables, fresh meats and dairy prod-



Photos by SrA. Chrissy Szczepanski

A redeploying service member fills out a U.S. Customs Form 6059B to declare gifts and purchase acquired while deployed to Bright Star. Service members receive the form when processing out of the Joint Reception Center.

ucts, raw plant products (straw, hay), ivory artifacts and national treasures (war trophies), illegal drugs and paraphernalia, water pipes, untreated wood products, camel-hair products, dirt and sand, munitions, switchblades, pornography and Cuban Cigars.

Members purchasing tobacco products may not have more than 100 cigars or 200 cigarettes (one carton) when they prepare to depart.

If the price tag of a member's purchases, including gifts and personal souvenirs, is in excess of \$500, the person will have to pay duties (taxes) on their purchases.

Rocks are allowed to be taken. But they must first be rinsed of all dirt.

For more information on what people can and cannot take back to the states, contact Rice or Abendschoen through the Base Defense Operations Center at Ext. 5703.



Rice and Abendschoen inspect bags of redeploying service members.